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U.S. Says Spy Suspect Had Access to Highly Classified Data

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 2 — A retired Central Intelligence Agency analyst charged with espionage had access to highly classified information gathered by covert American intelligence agents, the Justice Department said today.

A senior law-enforcement official said that the disclosure indicated that the analyst, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, may have helped the Chinese determine the identity of American agents working in China.

The information about Mr. Chin's access to intelligence gathered by covert agents was contained in a new indictment issued today by a Federal grand jury in Alexandria, Va. The 17-count indictment replaced an indictment issued last month that charged Mr. Chin with one count of espionage.

In the new indictment, Mr. Chin was charged with six espionage counts, which could result in life imprisonment. He was also accused of several counts of filing false tax reports to the Federal Government.

Mr. Chin was charged in the new indictment with accepting nearly $200,000 in cash and gold in exchange for his espionage activities. In the indictment last month Mr. Chin was said to have received more than $140,000.

Prosecutors said in court documents that Mr. Chin had admitted to Federal agents that he was a Chinese spy. According to Federal officials, the espionage went on for more than 30 years.

In court appearances, Mr. Chin, 63 years old, a former C.I.A. translator and analyst who had access to all levels of classified intelligence material, has vigorously denied any wrongdoing.

The new indictment provided several new details of Mr. Chin's work at the agency, where he served from 1952 until 1981. It raised the possibility that Mr. Chin might have had access to information about the identity of American informers working in China.

Mr. Chin, the document said, "reviewed, translated and analyzed classifed documents from covert and overt human and technical collection sources which went into the West's assessment of Chinese strategic, military, economic, scientific and technical capabilities and intentions."

In intelligence jargon, a covert human collection source is an American spy, usually overseas. Technical sources refer to such things as spy satellites and wiretaps.

A Federal law-enforcement official, who asked not to be identified, said it was possible that Mr. Chin had learned the identities of American agents in China and disclosed the information to the Chinese. The official said, however, that it was also possible Mr. Chin had been presented with information from the covert agents without learning their identities.

"Sometimes, even though classified information comes from covert human sources, their identities could still have been" a secret to Mr. Chin, the official said.

In addition, the indictment said, Mr. Chin "was involved and aware of the West's intelligence requirements regarding the People's Republic of China."

The indictment also said that Mr. Chin had at least 14 meetings with Chinese agents over his purported espionage career. The earlier indictment listed 11 encounters in cities, including Peking, Hong Kong and Toronto.

One of the previously undisclosed meetings occurred in London in November 1981, prosecutors said. About four months after the meeting, the indictment said, nearly $30,000 was deposited in a Hong Kong bank maintained by Mr. Chin.

The indictment asserted that Mr. Chin began receiving payments from the Chinese by at least 1952, when he began work for the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, a branch of the Central Intelligence Agency.

That year, the indictment said, Mr. Chin received $2,000 from Chinese agents in exchange for information concerning the location of Chinese prisoners of war held by the United States in the Korean War. If convicted on all charges, Mr. Chin could also be fined more than $2.5 million.

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